

Lawmakers Call for GAO Probe of Security at Lawrence Livermore Nuclear Lab

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Simulated Terrorist Attack Highlights Security Vulnerabilities

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“In April of 2008, the Department of

Energy's Office of Independent Oversight evaluated safeguards and security at Lawrence Livermore and the results were troubling," Dingell said. "The evaluation identified serious problems with equipment, staffing and training. Given that this facility houses significant quantities of nuclear material, this alarming state of affairs is completely unacceptable in a post 9-11 world."

Since 2005, DOE has been working on a plan to remove plutonium from Lawrence Livermore National Lab, but even with additional resources being provided by Congress, DOE maintains it will still take until 2012 to complete the plan.

"Even though Department of Energy may plan to remove nuclear material from Lawrence Livermore in four years, the Department of Energy must continue to maintain effective security at this site as long as nuclear material is housed there," Stupak said. "The Subcommittee intends to carefully monitor Department of Energy and the National Nuclear Safety Administration efforts to improve security Lawrence Livermore."

Simulated Terrorist Attack Succeeds in Seizing Mock Plutonium

During the April 2008 security evaluations, DOE's Office of Independent Oversight used a highly trained mock adversary to simulate a terrorist attack targeting the plutonium storage area at Livermore Labs. Using lasers, instead of real ammunition, the mock adversary was able to defeat the security force, reach its target, and seize the mock plutonium.

The lawmakers said the results of those evaluations are especially troublesome because DOE and its contractor had advanced notice of and pre-approved the tests. The lab was given the schedule for the most recent tests nearly a year in advance.

"The only good news here is that this was a simulated attack, not a real one," Dingell added. "Hopefully, this exercise will help us identify problem areas and determine how best to tighten security measures."

Safeguards
and security tests at DOE nuclear weapons sites are supposed to be conducted every two years to ensure that each site is able to resist a

terrorist attack. The last physical security force test at Lawrence Livermore was conducted in 2006. Since 2003, DOE has required its labs to implement more robust defenses in response to the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

On October 1, 2007, Lawrence Livermore National Security (LLNS) replaced the University of California (UC) as DOE's Management and Operating contractor. Despite the fact that DOE has provided LLNS with up to \$45.3 million in annual award fees, six times the \$7.1 million paid to UC, the DOE's Independent Oversight Team found that:

- LLNS's protective force management had failed to keep key security equipment fully functional, despite repeated warnings that the equipment was frequently in the maintenance shop.

- The front line protective force supervisor was not able to properly direct security force units during the simulated assault, due to the fact that LLNS management had overburdened him with far too many simultaneous responsibilities.

- LLNS and DOE's local officials failed to find weaknesses in their own security regime, but weaknesses were evident when tests were run by DOE's Independent Oversight Team.

Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC (LLNS) is a consortium of Bechtel National, Inc., the University of California, Babcock and Wilcox Company, Washington Division of URS Corporation and Battelle Memorial Institute.

Read the Letter

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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